

FACTORS JUSTIFYING MAINTAINING A FULL-TIME REGIONAL  
PUBLICATIONS OFFICER (RPO) AT PARIS AND LONDON

This paper is intended to present factual reasons supporting the need for retention of the Publications Procurement Officer at both Embassies Paris and London, and is addressed to the consideration of a tentative proposal made by Inspectors Philip B. Sprouse and Robert M. Marr to abolish the position of Publications Procurement Officer, Paris, and to assign the duties of that Officer to the RPO, London. Their proposal was made following the recent inspection of the Embassy, Paris, and is contained in paragraph five of the Inspectors' comments on the Publications Procurement Program, dated September 5, 1961. The paragraph reads:

"Although the Inspectors will review this point further during the forthcoming inspection of the Embassy in London where there is also an American Publications Procurement Officer, it appears that a single officer could give adequate supervision to both of these offices, permitting the abolition of one of the two American positions. In view of growing concern about the American presence in Paris it would appear that the supervisory functions might be assigned to London and the Paris position abolished."

I. GENERAL BACKGROUND.

The positions of RPO were established in London and Paris in 1945, primarily to enable the Department of State to meet its responsibilities toward other agencies and departments of the United States Government in carrying out the overt collection of foreign published data. Statutory authority for these responsibilities is defined in the following documents:

- A. Foreign Service Act of 1946, Section 311.
- B. Executive Order 10249 of June 4, 1951.
- C. NSCID 2 of September 15, 1958.
- D. DCID 2/5 of June 26, 1959.

Procurement for the Department of State itself has been, and remains, an important function of these offices, but in terms of funds expended, volume of publications supplied, diversity of demand, and total workload, the services performed for other agencies far outweigh the work done for the Department of State in Washington. The following U. S. agencies and departments comprise the major end-users utilizing the services of the RPO's at Paris and London:

Department of State	Department of Interior
Central Intelligence Agency	Department of Treasury
National Security Agency	Department of Defense *
Army Map Service	Library of Congress
United States Information Agency	Department of Agriculture Library
Department of Commerce	National Library of Medicine

\*Note: Support of Defense Department (G-2, A-2, ONI) is reflected in RPO's assistance of Defense attaches in Embassy.

In addition, several smaller organizations including those under contract to the U. S. Government (e.g., RAND Corporation), and private institutions (e.g., American Chemical Society), utilize the Department's RPO facilities upon request.

In both Paris and London, the RPO also serves as a procurement officer for the Embassy and for other posts. In both cases, the work done for the other posts is on a world-wide basis. The fact remains, however, that the great bulk of funds, orders, instructions, and correspondence come from Washington, and from sources outside the Department of State. Administratively, the RPO is a Foreign Service Officer, but functionally he is interdepartmental. For some fifteen years these two positions have consistently demonstrated their value to Washington, to the embassies where they are located, and to other U. S. missions.

## II. THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND THE PUBLICATIONS PROCUREMENT PROBLEM.

Under present conditions of major world-wide political and economic readjustment, and particularly because of mounting East-West tension, the need for current and background information from all available sources is acute. Two of the best sources are London and Paris. Except Moscow, where there are two RPO's, these two cities comprise the largest publishing centers in the world, and their publications cover virtually every geographic area and subject. Both are major centers of the international book trade, and as such have proved to be valuable channels for the acquisition of foreign publications not available in the country of origin.

The situation in other posts is less reassuring. In recent years, the Soviets have liberalized their publications policy, but there remain difficulties and restrictions in obtaining important publications and in shipping from Moscow; further, the Soviet authorities may see fit to increase these difficulties and restrictions at any time. Other sources for Soviet publications are essential. Berlin has been one of them, and also the major source for East German publications, but the crisis there is currently impeding the flow. RPO, Berlin has been checking the possibility of getting Satellite subscriptions and books through Vienna, Bern, Helsinki and Stockholm. Recently, the Department asked both Paris and London to investigate the availability of East German serials. Thus these latter posts are important not only for their current production, but as a safeguard against difficulty elsewhere.

### III. THE RPO FUNCTION IN PARIS.

#### A. GENERAL.

The importance of Paris as a source of publications not available in the country of origin has been mentioned above, but deserves some elaboration. With respect to procurement of Soviet publications, Paris has been second only to Moscow for many years. Paris was the principal supplier of Bulgarian publications prior to the opening of the Legation in Sofia, and remains a useful source. Paris is the principal supplier of publications from Albania, and a significant supplier of other Satellite publications. Paris has been able to get newspapers from North Korea and North Vietnam which were not available through any other channel. Recently, one of the Paris dealers has developed a contact in Outer Mongolia which promises to supply material heretofore unavailable.

Though the acquisition of publications from foreign countries is an important function, French publications require the major effort of the RPO. To keep abreast of the large and constantly changing publications output of France is by no means easy. Government publications alone constitute a substantial problem and they are a major source of information, not only on France but on other areas, particularly Africa. The private press of France falls close behind that of Great Britain in volume, and equals it in diversity. If the press is somewhat less voluminous than that of England, it is also less orderly and not so well documented. It is particularly notable that many specialized but significant publications are ignored in the book trade journals, and are mentioned in the "Bibliographie de la France" only after a lapse of months, or in some cases more than a year, if at all. A thorough knowledge of French sources and a constant effort to keep in touch with them are therefore requisite to the RPO function. Extremely helpful in this process are French contacts in government, academic circles, library circles, and in the book trade itself. Such contacts do not arise spontaneously, but depend upon initiation and cultivation by the RPO, and the supply of publications, bibliographic aid and other services in return.

#### B. THE SELECTION JOB.

The RPO's knowledge of publications is basic to the effective procurement, on his own initiative, of publications which have not been ordered. At present, the RPO has selection funds provided by agencies and departments in Washington for the selection of publications following general and specific requirements which cover about twenty (20) pages, and which are supplemented from time to time by requirements to support individual research projects. The procurement of useful publications not known to the Washington agencies is the true test of the RPO's ability, and there is scarcely any limit to the amount of knowledge and initiative he can use in this function. In this operation, the knowledge of publications is one aspect; the other is knowledge of requirements.

The existence of certain projects and even the identification of certain agencies with continuing requirements are frequently classified information. It is notable that in the case of the largest consumer, CIA, funds available to the RPO for this purpose are limited only by the RPO himself, since payment is made for the total amount of material which the RPO is able to supply. Funds for two of the other agencies, the National Security Agency and the Army Map Service, are currently quite flexible and can be increased as necessary. It should be borne in mind that even where funds are unlimited, the selection process involves rejection as well as purchase, both to avoid the waste of funds and to obviate the handling of unnecessary publications in Paris and Washington. In cases where funds are limited, for example the selection funds authorized by LR on behalf of the Department, the judgment of the RPO in selecting one publication as compared with another in the same general field is obviously of greater concern, but in both cases a comprehensive knowledge of available material is necessary to effect proper job performance. To whatever extent the RPO is not a master of the publications business, funds will be wasted, valuable information lost, and targets of opportunity perhaps missed forever.

#### C. THE REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

An important function of the RPO, Paris is the improvement of the part-time PPO operations in the area of responsibility by guidance to and stimulation of the part-time PPO's. The posts assigned to the RPO, Paris are Brussels, The Hague, Lisbon, Madrid, and Rome. An annual visit should be made to each post, as a bare minimum, and each visit should occupy from two to five working days. Visits to publishing centers outside of the capitals are desirable.

In general, the operation of the part-time publications procurement program has not been satisfactory to consumers in Washington. This is not to say that it has not been useful, but in comparison with what the program could produce, the results have been seriously deficient. The response to specific orders and instructions addressed to the part-time PPO posts is generally good, but with few exceptions the selection activity is slight and sporadic. The generally ragged performance in these jobs derives reasonably enough from the circumstances in which they operate. The part-time PPO always has other assignments of higher priority; he is usually a very junior officer and often new to the post; he seldom has the benefit of instruction from a competent predecessor, or any adequate knowledge of the program; usually he has no knowledge of fiscal procedure; often his knowledge of the language of the host country is deficient, or even lacking entirely. Consequently, this potentially valuable program is dragging badly, and needs constant direction and stimulation. These can best be given by a person who is: (1) fully acquainted with Washington needs; (2) cognizant of operating problems in the Foreign Service; (3) experienced in bibliography, the book trade, and research materials of all kinds; and (4) expert in all phases of procurement in the field. The only person who meets all of these requirements is the full-time RPO. It may be appropriate to add, parenthetically, that the posts under the direction of the RPO, Paris are, on the average, more active than part-time posts elsewhere, but there is ample room for improvement nevertheless.

D. SERVICES TO THE EMBASSY IN PARIS.

RPO, Paris estimates that services to the Embassy in Paris account for about ten (10) percent of the total expenditure of funds and for about twenty-five (25) percent of the total workload of the RPO office. This disproportion is probably due largely to the constant availability of the RPO for consultation and procurement action. As a member of the Embassy staff, the RPO is exposed to more individual demands from the Embassy than from Washington, and as the Embassy specialist is expected to solve any problem of publications procurement. The Embassy staff would be the first to feel the loss of the RPO, and other members of the Embassy staff would have to perform bibliographic and procurement work which is now done by the RPO, or do without it.

IV. THE RPO FUNCTION IN LONDON.

Compared with the RPO, Paris position, the overall responsibilities of the RPO, London are about equal. Aside from numerous details in the daily operations which differ from those in Paris, the principal differences appear to lie in the greater volume of non-indigenous publications procured in Paris, and in the regional responsibility lodged there.

A. GENERAL.

The total volume of British publications somewhat exceeds that of France, and there is a larger clientele in Washington for British publications than for French -- both book and subscription orders run to higher figures, as noted below:

<u>Fiscal Year 1961</u>		<u>London</u>	<u>Paris</u>
Newspapers	(issues)	18,916	14,932
Journals	(issues)	16,300	9,081
Books	(volumes)	9,400	8,100
		<u>44,616</u>	<u>32,113</u>

Although the above figures do not reflect the greater quantity of non-French publications available in Paris as opposed to non-English publications in London, and thus the overall larger number of publications procured by RPO, Paris, they do include the substantially larger number of annuals available at London. The term annuals as used here includes publications issued at intervals up to three years. These annuals include reports of government agencies, research, educational and financial institutions; handbooks and directories of industries, professions and trades. Many are international in scope.

B. THE SELECTION JOB.

In terms of general guide-line requirements and procedures, the selection operation at London parallels that of Paris very closely. Since London is a traditional and active center of the international book trade, there are many requirements to scour the various bookstores and kiosks for materials out-of-print in the country of origin, for materials that for one or more reasons have not been cited in bibliographies, and for materials in limited editions. To perform the selection job in London, the RPO must be particularly alert for reports issued by and about international organizations, meetings and conferences which are published in English, though the headquarters may be outside of the British Isles, and the meetings may be held anywhere. The RPO must also maintain a broad and current knowledge of the activities and publications of numerous private and public organizations, both national and international. In overall terms, the problems of knowing publications and sources, developing and maintaining contacts, and relating available material to Washington requirements are approximately equal to those in Paris.

C. SPECIAL SERVICES.

During the course of a given year, the RPO, London will render services of a special nature for several of the Federal agencies and departments in Washington. Such services may consist of tracking down and obtaining hard-to-get items for the Library of Congress, when LC's normal commercial dealer channels have failed; conducting, in person, negotiations for very expensive and/or rare items on behalf of the Library of Congress or other national library, whenever use of commercial dealers would not be adequate; investigating special sources and/or channels on behalf of such departments as Agriculture, Commerce, Treasury, Justice, etc., in order that the know-how of the RPO may be used to bolster and assist such other personnel or facilities which these departments may have at their disposal in London or in the United Kingdom.

The RPO, London will process during this same period of time a dozen or more "crash" items, consisting of requests for publications extremely hard to locate by reason of being out-of-print, or unavailable to general purchasers (in some cases they may be British Government official or semi-official items which have been refused to other elements in the Embassy), as well as items of an other-than-usual sort which are demanded by Washington on an extremely urgent basis. To perform the service required in such cases demands that the RPO, in addition to having a highly knowledgeable grasp of the operations, be a person well established in the sense of having many key contacts who are disposed to render support on a frankly personal basis...support that would simply be refused to a higher ranking but less "established" person.

D. EXCHANGE PROGRAM.

While procurement of publications through the mechanism of exchanges is generally less efficient and more costly than direct purchase, whether for Washington end-users or the Embassy itself, a number of vital publications are not commercially available under any circumstances and must be obtained in this manner. RPO, London is currently provided with twenty (20) U. S. publications for actual exchange and contact use. Whenever budgetary problems sharply limit the cash-purchase power of one or more agencies, a problem which the Embassy at London faces in FY 62, it becomes essential to fall back on exchange procedures in order to support basic operations. The cumbersome and involved nature of an exchange program requires considerable "on-the-spot" supervision by a thoroughly knowledgeable person, with many solid personal contacts. To attempt to operate such a program by correspondence or through the services of a part-time PPO or local employee is inefficient in the extreme, quickly resulting in breakdowns in service and mounting costs which not only hamper the work of the Department and/or Embassy but which negate the economy-of-cash sought through substantial increases in labor and communication costs. The use of the RPO, London in this matter has proved its extreme usefulness within the narrow range desired.

V. INTERNAL OPERATIONS OF RPO OFFICES AT PARIS AND LONDON.

A. GENERAL

The conclusion of the Inspectors' report which reads, "...it appears that a single officer could give adequate supervision to both of these offices, permitting the abolition of one of the two American positions" clearly implies that the Inspectors regard the RPO positions as primarily supervisory. Such an appraisal takes cognizance neither of the broad scope of knowledge of and familiarity with the several programs and requirement patterns from U. S. intelligence agencies and departments in Washington which the RPO must have, nor of the fact that such knowledge and familiarity cannot be imparted to local employees for security reasons.

B. SUPERVISION OF LOCALS.

In both Paris and London, the locals are experienced, competent and reliable people. Most of the work they perform is by its very nature routine, and consequently does not require constant review and supervision. Nevertheless, their work as total office effort has to be reviewed and supervised by the RPO to determine its overall efficiency and productivity. Every day situations arise in which the decisions and actions to be taken can only be decided by an American official. For example, all incoming requirements, orders, requests, etc. for publications to be procured, or identified, or searched; for bills to be paid, or for vouchers to be certified correct for payment; for answers to inquiries concerning publishing in general, availability of publications in particular, etc., are the RPO's immediate business.

The local staff at Paris was reduced from four to three positions in January 1961, and currently the workload handled by the three is very heavy. As a result of that January reduction, the RPO is now doing some work which was formerly done by the locals. At London, the local situation has been constant for some time. One and one-half bodies (the second local employee is shared with the mail room) are available to the RPO for routine operations, which also means that the RPO at London does do more of the strictly routine office procedures than does the RPO at Paris.

C. THE CONCEPT OF THE REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS OFFICER (RPO).

The Publications Procurement Officer (PPO) at both Paris and London is also a Regional Publications Procurement Officer (RPO). That is to say, the RPO at Paris is responsible for coordinating all publications procurement requirements and procedures in effect at Paris, at other posts throughout metropolitan France, and at missions in those other countries comprising the Paris RPO's regional authority, i.e., Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Similarly, the RPO at London coordinates all publications procurement carried out in the United Kingdom.

As described in 4 FMS 943.31, the "Regional publications officers will be assigned by the Department to those Foreign Service posts where publications of value to Federal agencies exist in large quantities, are not adequately reported in current national or trade bibliographies, are not readily obtainable through commercial channels, or their prompt receipt requires local selection. They will be assigned to posts where it is anticipated that the greater portion of their activities will be centered. However, they will have regional responsibilities which will include guidance for part-time publications officers in countries within their areas of operation through the principal officers of such posts."

To provide proper guidance, it is essential that the RPO travel within his region on a regular basis, visiting each part-time PPO in the countries included at least once a year, and discussing with each part-timer the procurement situation prevailing at that time, elaboration of requirements which have been or are to be served upon a given post, reviewing local publishing conditions, and the general availability of publications. The RPO on such occasions also serves to guide the part-time officer towards setting up a more effective procurement operation, and to assist in the clarification of the many complex aspects of the job, including fiscal problems.

Combining the Paris position with London position, or vice versa, will render totally impossible the ability of the RPO to travel regularly within his region. This fact will of course not change at all the need for guidance to these part-time officers. It will undoubtedly develop that such guidance will be attempted through an increased dependence upon correspondence and communications of all sorts. Such methods are weak when compared with personal visits by the RPO, and are in fact much more expensive and far less efficient.

D. RPO AS COORDINATOR OF PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS.

The fact cannot be overemphasized that the work of a publications procurement office consists largely of a multitude of seeming unrelated actions taken for a large number of individual requesters. As mentioned earlier, many of the routine actions performed in such an office are done by the locals, with little or no immediate supervision. In all cases, however, the RPO must know the correlation of these several diverse actions in terms of the larger picture or program to which they pertain. The needs of the intelligence community comprise the RPO's largest and most important consumer area. For the RPO in turn to address himself to these needs, both general and specific, he must 1) have a good background in the many fields of interest and substantive requirements expressed by the several agencies participating; 2) determine what priorities take precedence in cases of limited or varying availability of publications; 3) preserve, in all action taken by him, the security involved, including the unauthorized disclosure of particular consumer agency identity; 4) bear the responsibility for all funds or fund authorities used; and 5) report regularly on the status of the program, including contacts made, visits or trips taken, number of orders, requirements, etc., filled, number pending, fund balances, etc. These are demands that the major agencies in Washington call upon the RPO to fill; they are not all the effort of the RPO.

E. RPO AS PUBLICATIONS SELECTION OFFICER.

One of the most important functions of the full-time RPO is his responsibility to seek out and purchase, of his own volition, those publications which his background, language ability, and requirement guides tell him are of value to the various Washington agencies which have authorized funds for this purpose. This latter function alone, from its value to intelligence research, justifies the full-time American officer at both Paris and London. Under this voluntary selection program the ability to uncover and purchase soon after publication the best of the new literature in several fields of interest has paid rewarding dividends. The RPO's at Paris and London have developed important contacts in the book trade of both capitals to insure the receipt of such new material. By its very nature, this function can be done only by a knowledgeable individual on a full-time basis, since it involves 1) mature, broad scope of knowledge including strong language ability; 2) intimate familiarity with the specific needs and requirements of the several intelligence agencies and departments; 3) full authority to answer for funds utilized and all necessary fiscal reporting; 4) reporting on the availability of publications as required. It is readily apparent that this entire voluntary selection program is beyond the scope of a local staff, and even of an American officer on a part-time basis. In this particular area, the full-time RPO can only supervise his own activities.

F. CONCLUSION.

The role of the full-time American RPO at both Paris and London is of vital interest and value to the entire Washington area and to the missions themselves. It is unquestionably the one collection program providing the most intelligence for the least amount of monetary expenditure. Elimination of the function at either post would seriously impair the current acquisition of intelligence. In view of the current world situation, this elimination of or reduction in the procurement of publications is considered to be highly dangerous. So dangerous, indeed, that it could be fairly prophesied that elimination of either officer, who represents several agencies, might well result in up to four of these agencies insisting on stationing their own FPO at one or both posts. Thus, this step could, ultimately, increase rather than decrease the "American Presence" at these posts.